

DO'S AND DON'TS OF DEALING WITH DIFFICULT CUSTOMERS

from A Different Work: A First Course in effective Supervision

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DO	DON'T
Listen completely before trying to answer the customer.	Interrupt and assume you know what the customer is going to say.
Ignore exaggerations, sarcasm, or personal attacks	Lose sight of the customer's major complaint because of exaggeration, sarcasm, or personal attacks.
Control your emotions	Lose your temper and lash back at the customer
Use the word "problem" or "situation."	Use the word "complaint."
Say "I understand. . ."	Say, "You allege. . ." or "You say. . ."
Apologize for any inconvenience	Accuse other departments or individuals for causing the problem. Try to defend what has happened. Ask for sympathy or understanding Make accusations against the customer.
Explain the reason behind the court policy.	Say, "That's court policy."
Get all pertinent information on initial contact.	
Find things you can agree on with the customer.	
Say, "I suggest. . ."	"Say, "You'll have to. . ."
Give the customer choices.	Say, "The only thing you can do. . ."
List the things you can do.	List the things you cannot do.

WELCOME TO THE INDIANA COURTS

Poster prepared by the Division of State Court Administration

WHAT WE CAN DO . . .

WE CAN provide you with a telephone number of local lawyer referral services.

WE CAN explain and answer questions about how the court works.

WE CAN provide you general information about court rules, procedures and practices.

WE CAN provide you information from your case file.

WE CAN provide a copy of the small claims manual and court forms that are available and instructions on how to complete them.

WE CAN review your papers for completeness by checking for signature, notarization, correct county name, and correct case number.

WHAT WE CANNOT DO . . .

WE CANNOT provide legal advice or legal interpretations. Only a lawyer can give you legal advices

WE CANNOT advise you whether or not you should bring your case to court or give you an opinion about what will happen if you bring your case to court

WE CANNOT advise you what to say in court

WE CANNOT let you talk to the judge outside court or talk to the judge for you about what will happen in your case.

WE CANNOT fill out a form for you or tell you what words to use in your court papers.

WE CANNOT sign an order or change an order signed by the judge.

THE HEAT METHOD (H-10)

H Hear them out

- Let the customers tell their side of the story.
- Let them vent.

E Empathize

- Acknowledge and respond to the customers' feelings.

A Ask/Answer questions

- Ask the customers questions to get them to tell you the information you need to help them with their situation.

T Take responsibility for assisting

- Help the customers resolve their situation.

REMEMBER: You cannot begin to resolve an emotional situation until you have "turned down the HEAT."

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USING THE HEAT METHOD (H-11)

WAYS TO HEAR THEM OUT

- Use your body language to let them know you are listening.
- Nod your head.
- Avoid crossing your arms.
- Maintain a pleasant smile.
- Stay calm.

WAYS TO EMPATHIZE

- Use "I" messages, such as "I understand how you can feel that way."
- Clarify what you are hearing by repeating words back to the customer.
- Avoid interrupting or lecturing them on your requirements or restrictions.
- Apologize for what happened, even though it may not be your responsibility.

WAYS TO ASK/ANSWER QUESTIONS

- Be prepared to ask short, to-the-point questions that will help uncover the needed facts in the situation.
- Do not tell them what they have done wrong.
- Avoid lecturing on the right way to proceed. Instead, offer prompts on what makes sense as next steps.

WAYS TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ASSISTING

- Know your job and options for solving customer problems.
- Use your expertise and caring attitude to help resolve the issue.
- Use resources as needed.
- Refer the customer to your manager only as a last resort.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY NEXT? (H-12)

1. "This is the second time you people have made me come in to pay this! Why do you keep hassling me?"
2. "I was waiting for a notice or a letter from the court. I received this warrant notice—you made a mistake."
3. "I went to renew my driver's license and they couldn't do it because of a traffic warrant. I remember getting a ticket. I don't remember the date; but I know I paid it."
4. "You've got to have my case, everyone that appeared after me has already been called."
5. "You mean you can't tell me what the sentence is going to be? I need to know if I am going to jail or not."
6. "Why is the fee so high? You people really know how to stick it to the public."
7. "I just came out of Small Claims court with a money judgment. What do you mean, I have to collect, don't you do that? That guy didn't pay me before, what makes you think he'll pay me now?"
8. "I'm so confused, now what do I do?"